

6
AN

A D D R E S S

TO THE

N A T I O N S

OF

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,

ON THE PROJECTED

U N I O N.

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL STANHOPE.

—D U B L I N:—

PRINTED FOR J. MOORE, 45, COLLEGE-GREEN.

1799.

ADDRESS, &c.

Fellow Citizens,

AT this time of danger, even more than of alarm, it is the duty of an honest man to address you, on the state of public affairs. And it is precisely, because the danger is greater than your apprehension of it, that I deem it the more incumbent upon me, to call your attention to one of the most extraordinary and unconstitutional measures, that ever has been agitated, in this, or in any other country, which has any pretence to term itself a free nation.

It is now publicly avowed, that an attempt is to be made, by the Ministers of the Crown, to deprive the people of Ireland of their separate legislature, by substituting for that national Parliament to which they have a right, a few votes in a foreign Parliament, which can never be equally acquainted with their dearest interests. A foreign Parliament which can never be equally apprized of the feelings, of the sentiments, and the wishes of the Irish nation. A foreign Parliament, which, we, who live under it, have already been insolently told, is "the Parliament of the King, and is not the Parliament of the people!" That Parliament, which is, and ever must be foreign, to the local concerns of Ireland, will probably not become more the Parliament of the people, by having Representatives from the boroughs of Ireland added to the unequal representation which now exists in Great-Britain.

The people of England, of Scotland, and of Ireland, have, moreover, been impudently told, that "the people have nothing to do with the laws,

laws, but to obey them!" The people of England, of Scotland, and of Ireland, are, however, of a very different opinion.

The late Aristocrat *Edmund Burke*, even before it was known that this project of Union was in agitation, stated, that there were, among the thinking part of the English nation (without including Ireland, and without including these numerous, useful, and industrious citizens, who have been insulted as a "Swinish Multitude,") no less a number than "Eighty Thousand INCORRIGIBLE Citizens, as he was pleased to term those most valuable men in this nation, who are firm friends to the sacred cause of Peace, of Liberty, Humanity, and Justice; and who are better friends to law, and to order, than those rash men, whose rash measures may hereafter precipitate this country into a state of ruin, misery, poverty, and wretchedness, unexampled either in ancient or in modern history. This country is *not* like a mere agricultural nation; without commerce, without arts, without manufactures, and without industry. This country, on the contrary, depends upon all these sources of wealth, not only for its prosperity, but likewise for its existence. It is a factitious country, depending upon credit, and depending upon its paper currency, to which the whole coin of the nation bears a proportion insignificantly small. It is a country, overwhelmed with public debt, and almost borne down by public taxes. And one should have thought, that if there were in the whole world, one country more than any another, where it was peculiarly important *not* wantonly to wound the public mind, and to exasperate the public feeling, Britain was that country, where the dictates of wisdom should prevail, where discretion and sober counsel should not give way, either to precipitancy or violence. Yet, it is in this very country, that we have heard the most liberticidal and audacious doctrines broached, and the most

most unprincipled and wicked language held upon subjects the nearest to the people's hearts. For, of what other description is the profligate language of those men who talk of "vigour beyond the law," that is to say, of arbitrary power, and pure despotism? Or, of what other description is the abandoned language of those men who have written and published that "the Kingly Government may go on, in *all* its functions, without Lords or Commons." That "they may be lopped off, and the tree be a tree still; shorn indeed of its honours, but *not*, like them, cast into the fire?" Such men should, at least, have had a little prudence and discretion! Such men, at least, should *not* have published and proclaimed their criminal designs, until they had obtained the Union.

A measure which is an insult even to those men in Ireland who have supported this very Administration. A measure of injustice to the people of that generous and warm-hearted nation, who are now represented by venal tongues, as men unworthy of any public trust, incapable of performing any public duty, and as men not fit to be trusted with a separate or independent Parliament!

The Protestant in Ireland, and the Catholic, the Protestant Dissenter and the Freethinker, the Tory and the Whig, the Aristocrat and the Democrat, the Yeoman and the United Irishman, ought all, as one man, to be averse to that measure of national ruin and of disfranchisement—to that measure of national degradation, and national contempt.

I should be glad to know, what possible security the people of Ireland can have, for the future performance of such articles, of the treaty of Union, as the majority in the new Imperial Parliament, (or whatever other whimsical name it is to have) may chuse, at any time hereafter, to infringe? My question is, where

is the remedy? And to what other, of third Tribunal, are the two islands to appeal?

I will suppose a case:—

So long as Ireland retains her Parliament, and so long as that Parliament shall sit at Dublin, it is quite out of the question to suppose, that the Irish Parliament ever would, or ever could consent, for instance, to permit, that a body of fifty or sixty thousand foreign mercenaries, either from Germany or from Russia, be landed in the island of Ireland, in order to be, there, permanently kept in garrison.

The Irish Parliament never could sanction such a project. The thing is morally impossible.

But, let the Union take place: What is to prevent a Parliament sitting in Westminster, at any time hereafter, to come to a vote to that effect; in order to render such a measure legal, which is now notoriously against law?

And, if the Westminster Parliament should be disposed to pass such a vote; what means will the Irish nation have, from a distance, to persuade the Westminster Parliament *not* to adopt a measure of that description?

And, if such a vote were to pass; in what would then consist the future liberty, or the future hopes of liberty, of the Irish people? Does *not* the mind of every man who has either a British or an Irish heart, revolt at such an idea, and at such a possibility? And any man, who may, moreover, believe, that such an event is probable, is neither a Briton, nor an Irishman, nor an honest man, if such an idea does *not* harrow up his soul.

The time is come for every man frankly and publicly to declare his sentiments. I take pride in declaring mine.

My opinion is, that the people at large of both nations, ought to meet, in order to discuss this important question of the Union. And then,

we shall see whether the very starting of such a proposition will, or will *not* answer the purpose (whatever it may be) which is intended by those short-sighted men, who have unwisely thought proper to propose it.

My respectable friends the patriots of property in Great Britain, will do themselves high honor, if they will stand perspicuously foremost, to call together the people in county meetings.

But, if they do *not* do it, or neglect to do it speedily, then, let other patriots of less property take the lead. And all men of integrity, and public spirit, will hail their honest and judicious efforts for the public good.

How insignificant are the opposers of the people's rights, when they appear in the presence of that immense assemblage of resolute, and sturdy citizens, who though resolved to be calm are determined to be free?

The glorious and decisive victory obtained by the people of the county of Kent, at our last and magnificent county meeting, ought to serve as an instructive example to the rest of the nation, of the proper course for them to pursue.

Not only all the freeholders, but all the inhabitants were called. The men of freehold property, who bare a very small proportion to the whole number, are not the only men who are interested in the public welfare. Is not the copyholder, is not the leaseholder, is not the merchant, is not the tradesman, is not the manufacturer, is not the citizen-cultivator, and the laborious and valuable artizan, deeply interested also in the prosperity of his country? Let all these, therefore, together with the freeholders, be assembled. The legal forms, in the calling of the meetings, should be strictly complied with; but let the people meet.

Let the meetings be called, openly and professedly, to reprobate the Union, to petition against

against the rapid increase of taxes, to petition against the English or Scotch militia being sent to Ireland, and equivocally to express the wish of the nation for a speedy peace with the French Republic. For these objects should the people meet.

The inhabitants should thus be assembled, in all the counties, in all the cities, and in all the towns, and in various parts of the metropolis. They should not only meet; but, they should meet frequently. Repeated meetings of the people tend to instruct, and to open the public mind. They are necessary, in every free country, to keep alive the public spirit.

The quick step of every species of collective evidence, is equally unnecessary and improper. But nothing is more easy than for the People, actuated by a strong and common feeling of their common interest, and proceeding with a common impulse, in the slow, but steady pace of legal step, to defeat the puny handful of the opposers of their unalienable rights; and to trample all their impotent projects of innovation in the dust.

Such is the plan (as yet unconcerted with any set of men) of an independent individual, who feels warmly for his country's welfare; who now lives, as a man of science, in honourable retirement; but who, never will be wanting to the People, when the People are not wanting to themselves.

Fellow Citizens.

At this momentous crisis, he deems it to be his duty to inform you of his opinions; and he is happy in this opportunity of declaring to the world at large, the ever unchanged, and unchangeable public principles, of your faithful and devoted fellow-citizen.

STANHOPE.

*Chevening House, near Sevenoaks,
in Kent, Jan. 21, 1799.*

